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Speaking Notes for
THE HONOURABLE ROB NICHOLSON, P.C., Q.C.,
M.P. for Niagara Falls
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
for the
Announcement of Intent to Introduce Legislation Dealing with Identity Theft

Montréal, Quebec

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Check against delivery

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased to be here with my colleague Minister Blackburn to announce another step in our Government's plan toward safer communities.

Our Government was elected to build a strong, safer, better Canada. We said we would tackle crime, and we remain committed to that goal – targeting crimes that affect Canadians most.

Identity theft has been identified as one of the fastest growing problems in North America, and one that easily crosses borders. Every day, the issue of identity theft affects or threatens more Canadian families, seniors and businesses.

Identity theft is costly to banks, retailers and consumers alike. The Canadian Council of Better Business Bureaus estimates that identity theft may cost Canadian consumers, banks and credit card firms, stores and other businesses more than $2 billion annually.

Technology has made it possible for individuals, governments and companies to collect and store huge quantities of personal information more efficiently. Consequently, technology has also made it easier, quicker and more lucrative for organized criminals to access and steal that information.

Identity theft has an impact on the daily lives of Canadians. It can affect our families, our businesses, our homes, our health and our bank accounts. And that is quite apart from the enormous emotional impact it has on its victims.

As it stands now, the misuse of another person's identity information is covered by current offences in the *Criminal Code*, such as identity fraud, personation and forgery. But the preliminary steps of collecting, possessing and trafficking identity information are generally not captured by existing offences.

This is why today, along with my colleague the Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec , I am here to announce our Government's intention to introduce legislation to amend the *Criminal Code* in the area of identity theft when Parliament resumes.

This new legislation will have one goal: to protect Canadians from identity theft by giving police

the tools they need to stop this activity before the damage is done .

For any government, there is no greater duty than the protection of its citizens.

Our Government remains unwavering in its determination to keep Canadians safe. This new legislation is but one part of our tackling-community-crime agenda.

Thank you. Now my colleague Minister Blackburn will now say a few words...

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